



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Homeless Census count starts early

Most people in Australia will complete their 2006 Census form as of where they are on Tuesday night, 8 August. However for people sleeping rough in Sydney, the count started at 5.30am on Monday when specially-trained collectors hit the streets.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has consulted with a range of organisations dealing with the homeless about their strategies and procedures for the Census.

Ms Sue Phillips, Director of Census in NSW acknowledges that getting an accurate count is a challenge.

"We take our responsibilities very seriously and are committed to getting an accurate count," Ms Phillips said.

While the focus of the Census count of the homeless will still be 8 August, teams will undertake the count at other times in Census week, mostly in conjunction with the provision of food services.

"Teams of special collectors have been allocated areas in which to undertake the count," Ms Phillips said.

"While it means that we will be going to some areas more than once, we will use the same teams to minimise the risk of double counting. In any case, given the transient nature of the homeless population, the risk of undercounting is higher than the risk of double counting"

Most of the special collectors recruited to count rough sleepers have experience in working with the homeless.

In the 2001 Census, around 100,000 people were counted in the homeless population of which around 14,000 were in the rough sleepers' category.

Ms Sue Cripps, Executive Officer, Homelessness NSW/ACT is strongly supportive of the Census.

"It seems very fitting that the 2006 Census count will take place during Homeless Persons Week," said Ms Cripps.

"The aim of this week is to raise the plight of homeless people. Getting an accurate count in the Census is critical to doing something about the extent of homelessness in Australia by helping us to target and improve our homelessness services, and working towards improving the quality of life for marginalised people," she said.

Mission Australia has also thrown their support behind the Census.

Anne Hampshire, National Manager Research and Social Policy for Mission Australia, said that in the past 20 years there have been changes in the type of person using homeless services.

"Many more single women, families and young people are experiencing homelessness. Census information will provide an insight to help us better understand and support homeless people in Australia," she said.

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